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ABSTRACT

The ability of personality and interest measures to predict faculty ratings of student performance better than academic measures was examined with 84 graduate and senior level undergraduate special education university students and 11 faculty members. Data from eight criteria measures, such as the Beta Biographical Inventory, California Psychological Inventory, Miller Analogies Test, and the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory were compared with faculty ratings in the areas of effectiveness, flexibility, responsibility, and sociability. Results indicated that the traditional academic criteria of achievement tests are poor predictors of faculty ratings of student performance. The personality and interest inventories were both the strongest and most consistent indicators of faculty preference of student characteristics. (IM)

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THE ADMISSIONS DILEMMA: TEACHER COMPETENCY vs. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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With the current emphasis on teacher classroom competencies and performance, an extensive research literature is being generated on teacher preparation in special education. Even with this emphasis little attention is being given to the study of the criteria by which applicants are admitted to teacher preparation programs. This omission or oversight has rather far-reaching consequences. With an increased number of applicants, restricted financial resources and consequent pressures on the administration for objective selection criteria, many administrators fall back on the more traditional selection criteria; namely, academic grades and standardized achievement tests.

Unfortunately, the field of teacher education does not have standardized instruments that will assess demonstrated behavioral competency or that will systematically differentiate between applicants. While informal and/or formal clinical judgement about competencies may be useful at varying points in the career development of teachers, its use in the selection process presents innumerable difficulties -- not least of which are the legal implications. Consequently, current admissions procedures and practices need to be reexamined to insure that the most valid indices of teacher competency and effectiveness are being used.

The Department of Special Education at the University of Utah, therefore, undertook a pilot study to explore alternative criteria that might minimize some of the current problems in the admission's dilemma. It was hypothesized that personality and

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interest measures would predict faculty ratings of student performance better than academic measures.

Method

Subjects

Eighty four graduate and senior level undergraduate students who were participating in Department programs during the 1974-75 academic year were selected for this study. In the sample of 70 females and 14 males, 45 were graduate and 39 were undergraduate students. Most of these students were in their 20s (with a mean age of 24).

Criteria Measures

The following criteria measures were obtained for each of the participating students:

1. Beta Biographical Inventory (BBI). This biographical questionnaire was used to assess creativity among upper division undergraduate students.
2. California Psychological Inventory (CPI). The CPI was designed to assess 18 personality variables among normal college students in such areas as social poise, tolerance, psychological mindedness, etc.
3. Cooperative English Test (CET). This college level achievement test assesses such skills as English effectiveness and mechanics, reading speed and comprehension, etc.
4. Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). The CGPA was an average of all undergraduate work completed at the University of Utah.
5. McGraw-Hill Spelling Test (MST). This is a college level spelling achievement test.

6. Miller Analogies Test (MAT). This is a graduate school aptitude test with an emphasis on analogies.
7. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). The MMPI is a psychiatric personality scale used to assess pathology.
8. Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (SCII). This inventory is the latest revision of the Strong Vocational Interest Blank and is used to measure occupational preferences.

Procedures

Test Battery. The selected students were requested to take the Beta Biographical Inventory, the California Psychological Inventory and the Strong-Campbell Inte rest Inventory. The other criteria measures were obtained from the student files.

Faculty Ratings. In order to assess the student's effectiveness within Department programs, the faculty (N =11) were requested to rate those students with whom they were familiar on a nine point scale. To insure a normal distribution of ratings, the faculty were directed as to the number of students that could be placed in each of the nine point categories (stanine scale). That is, the percentage of cases in the categories from 1 to 9 were 4, 7, 12, 17, 20, 17, 12, 7, 4 (approximate normal distribution). The four rating areas were:

1. Effectiveness: able to analyze and organize efficiently academic and field work assignments.
2. Flexibility: ability to generalize learning to novel situations, and use existing resources to solve problems.
3. Responsibility: believable, responsible, and reliable -- will follow through on assignments and self-generated tasks.

4. Sociability: able to get along with others, shows insight into interpersonal and social situations, relaxed and spontaneous in interpersonal situations.

Data Analysis

Pearson correlations were calculated between the criteria measures and the factor score of the faculty ratings. The PEARSON CORR subprogram of the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

Results

Reliability

The interrater reliability among the faculty judges for the 84 students was .94. The interrater agreement (the extent to which the faculty judges made a $\pm$ 1 point agreement about the same student) was 64 percent.

Faculty Ratings

Since there was a high intercorrelation among the four rating categories of effectiveness, flexibility, responsibility and sociability (the average correlation was .89), the categories were reduced (by means of factor analysis) to one factor: the effectiveness-responsibility factor. The factor scores were subsequently correlated with the criteria measures.

Criteria Measures

Figure 1 gives the relative standings of the Department students on the California Psychological Inventory. The results indicated that, in general, the students were more self-accepting, socially poised, tolerant, creative, intellectually efficient, psychologically insightful and flexible than the norm group (of college students). The Self-Control and Achievement via Independence scales,

on the other hand, correlated positively with the faculty ratings while the Good Impression scale correlated negatively. That is, students who scored above the Department norm on Self-Control and Achievement scales but below the norm on Good Impression were assessed more favorably by the faculty.

Figure 2 shows the results of the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory on the General Occupational Themes and the Basic Interest Scales. [1] The Basic Interest Scales and the Occupational Scales are subordinate to the General Occupational Themes. That is, the General Themes which describe a general section of the "occupational world" are further subdivided into more specific Interest Scales. On the General Occupational Themes, the Department students scored higher on the Artistic and Social themes than the norm group. Under the Artistic Theme, the students showed greater preference for the Music/Dramatics and Writing Basic Interest Scales than for other artistic interests. On the Social Theme, however, these students indicated interest in the Teaching and Athletic areas. Another Basic Interest Scales which was selected by the Department students was the Medical Services under the Investigative Theme. The best positive predictors of faculty ratings were the Social Theme and the Medical and Music/Dramatics Basic Interest Scales. The Writing Interest Scale, however, was a negative predictor.

Table 1 displays the results from the Cooperative English Test, the Cumulative Grade Point Average, the McGraw-Hill Spelling Test and the Miller Analogies

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[1] While the General Occupational Themes, the Basic Interest Scales and the Occupational Scales make up the Strong-Campbell subscales, the data from the Occupational Scales is not presented in this paper.

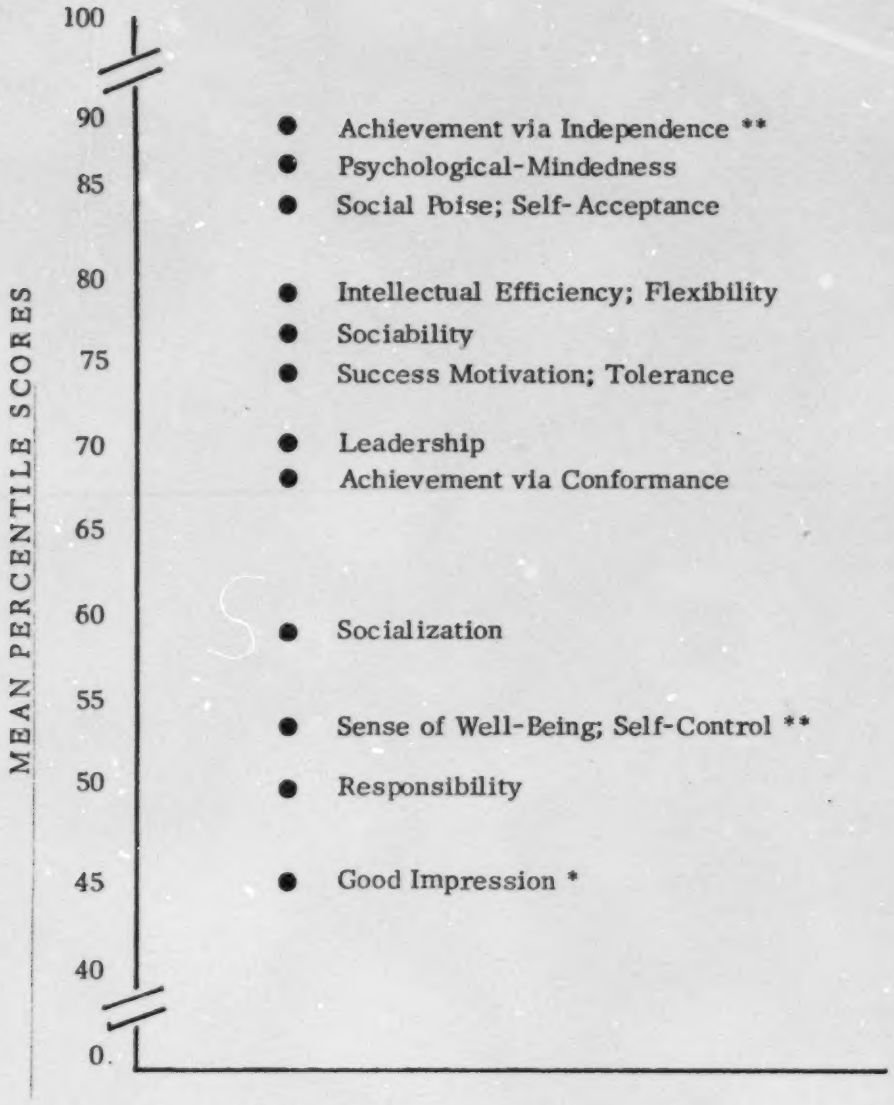

Figure 1. Comparison of the Department of Special Education students at the University of Utah with the national norms for college students on the California Psychological Inventory subscales.

* Negative predictor of faculty ratings
** Positive predictor of faculty ratings

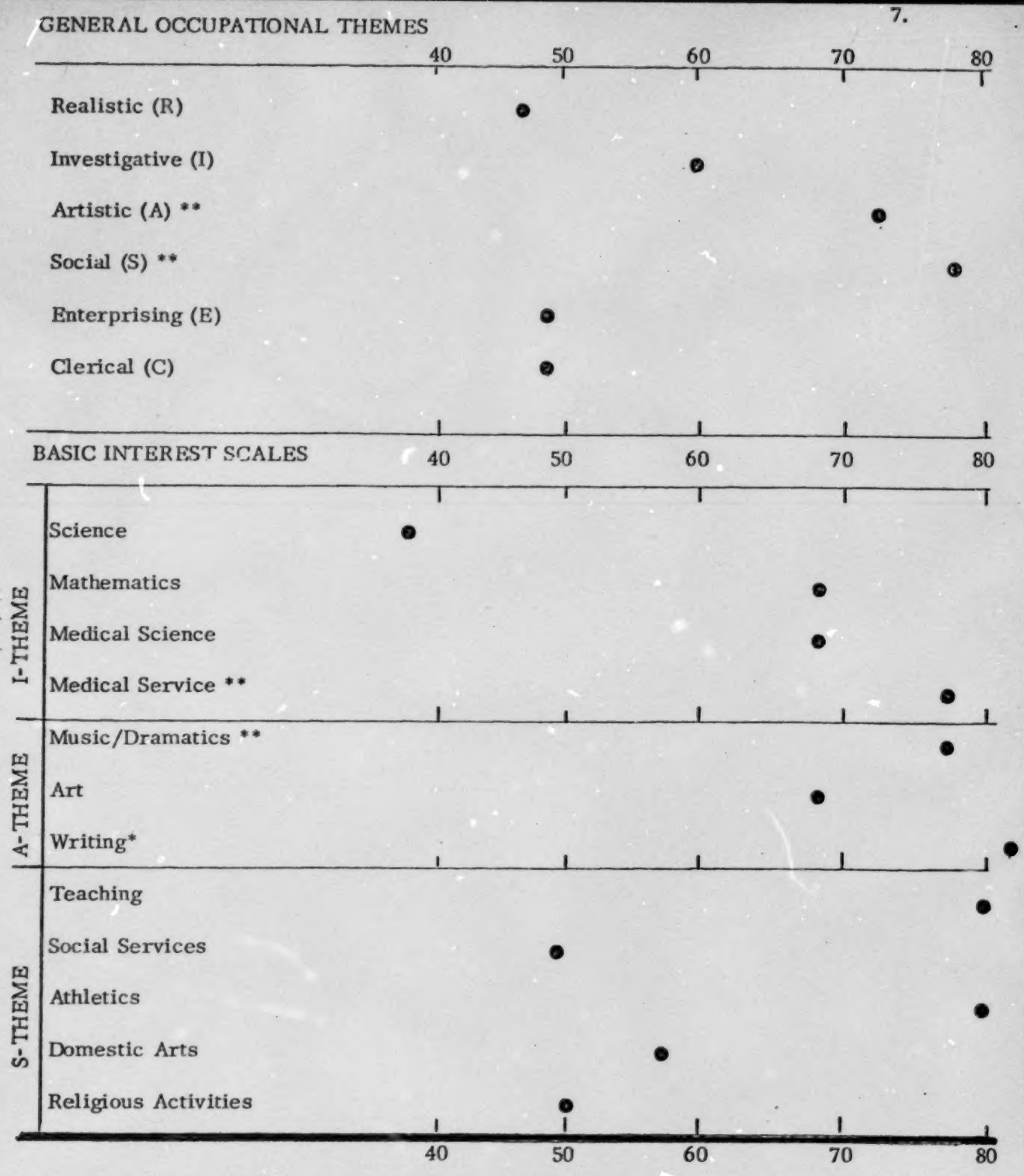

Figure 2. Comparison of the Department of Special Education students at the University of Utah with the general norms (600 males and females) for the General Occupational Themes and the Basic Interest Scales of the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (of the Strong Vocational Interest Blank).

*Negative predictor of faculty ratings
**Positive predictor of faculty ratings

Table 1

MEAN SCORES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND NATIONAL NORMS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT CRITERIA

ACHIEVEMENT MEASURES	DEPARTMENT	NATIONAL
Cooperative English Test	57	50
Miller Analogies Test	47	37[1]
McGraw-Hill Spelling Test	53	50
Cumulative Grade Point Average	3.18 **	2.82 [2]
Beta Biographical Inventory		
Creativity	107	100
Leadership	102	100
Intelligence (IQ)	110	100
GPA Predictor	120	100

** Positive predictor of faculty ratings

1 The average national Miller score for Education master's degree candidates is 37 while the average for doctoral candidates is 46.

2 The Grade Point Average was the University of Utah undergraduate cummulative grade point average. The Department GPA was the total undergraduate GPA achieved at the University.

Test. Although the criteria scores tend to be above the national norm, only the Grade Point Average correlates significantly with faculty ratings.

The results from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (not displayed here) indicated a significant relationship between the Schizophrenic and Hysteria scales and negative faculty ratings.

Summary.

Although a number of achievement, aptitude, personality and interest criteria were used to predict faculty ratings of effectiveness, flexibility, responsibility and sociability, the personality and interest criteria seemed to be the consistent significant predictors. The faculty assessed the Department students favorably if they displayed self-control and independent achievement orientation on the personality variables as well as medical services, music/drama, teaching and athletic interest areas. Predictors such as overreactivity (hysteria), mood swings (schizophrenia), attempting to make an overly positive impression as well as a very high interest in writing were negative indicators for faculty ratings.

Discussion

In general, this study has indicated that the traditional academic criteria of achievement tests are poor predictors of faculty ratings of student performance. As hypothesized, the personality and interest inventories were both the strongest and most consistent indicators of faculty preference of student characteristics. If these results can be generalized to other teacher education programs, the bias against non-academic criteria denote that admissions decisions are being made upon some of the weaker admissions criteria.

Of course these personality and interest criteria measures can be questioned on the basis of their reliability and validity -- for after all, even the test-naive individual knows that these tests can be readily distorted by the self-interest of the test taker. This criticism, however, is the most serious hurdle against the implementation of non-academic admissions criteria. Such criticism, furthermore, has become the terminal argument; that is, if these criteria can be distorted than they should be abandoned altogether.

Because of this kind of terminal thinking by admissions personnel, considerable valuable and sophisticated information is passed over. Even if personality and interest data can be unreliable under certain test taking situations (such as the knowledge that the measures will be used for selecting out the test taker), the data should, nevertheless, be used as a beginning point of altering admissions criteria and procedures. For example, these measures can be used as pre-admissions assessments for counseling students about their vocational decisions.

In addition, knowledge of these predictors can be utilized as a basis for planning and selecting appropriate curricular interventions during the preparation program. Such curricular interventions may be as formal as placing a student teacher with a cooperating teacher showing similar predictors e.g. high motivation or self control. Or they may be of a more informal nature such as occasional special experience groups to eliminate hysterical and anxiety behavior through desensitization and assertion training.